

Message Text

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13
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 TRSE-00 EB-07 EUR-12 PRS-01

INR-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00

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O 180430Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 425
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE
CINCPAC
CINCPAC REP PHILIPPINES SUBIC BAY RP

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DEPT PASS TREASURY AND AID

E.O. 11652: N/-
TAGS: EAIR, CASC, RP
SUBJECT: OVERDUE AIRCRAFT

REF: STATE 230843

1. REFTEL AP ALLEGATION THAT USG RESOURCES USEFUL
IN SEARCH FOR MISSING AIRCRAFT NOT DEPLOYED PENDING
GOP REQUEST IS TOTALLY ERRONEOUS. FROM BEGINNING OF
THIS TRAGIC EPISODE, U.S. HELICOPTERS HAVE BEEN POSI-
TIONED AND FLOWN IN MANNER CONSISTENT WITH PRIMARY
PHILIPPINE ROLE, WITH AVAILABLE PARTIAL INFORMATION
AND WITH AIR SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS. THOUGHOUT, PRIN-
CIPAL LIMITING FACTORS HAVE BEEN RUGGED MOUNTAINEOUS
TERRAIN SUBSTANTIALLY COVERED BY TROPICAL CANOPY TIMBER
AND EXTREMELY DIRTY WEATHER CHARACTERIZED BY HEAVY
CLOUD COVER AND FREQUENT LINE SQUALLS, (EG, AT PRESENT
WRITING CLOUD DECK IN SEARCH AREA IS FROM 2,500 TO
10,000 FEET). THESE CONDITIONS HAVE MINIMIZED VISUAL

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SIGHTING POSSIBILITIES AND BOTH MASKED AND PREVENTED

SUSTAINED AIR TRIANGULATION EFFORTS NECESSARY TO PIN-POINT ESSENTIALLY LINE OF SIGHT ELT BEEPER SIGNAL.

2. ON GROUND, DEPLOYMENT OF GOP MILITARY AND CONSTABULARY FORCES, HEAVILY AUGMENTED BY INDIGENOUS TRACKERS AND OTHER LOCALS IN SPARSELY POPULATED UPLAND AREAS AND SUPPLEMENTED BY AMERICAN OFFICERS FROM USAID, HAVE BEEN SIMILARLY IMPEDED BY TERRAIN AND WEATHER AS WELL AS BY HEAVY MASKING OF BEEPER SIGNAL. THERE ALSO IS TECHNICAL PROBLEM OF INCOMPATIBILITY OF UHF SEARCH FREQUENCY EQUIPMENT AND VHF BEEPER SIGNAL. BUT NOT RPT NOT APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE TO USG IS BEING OR HAS BEEN HELD BACK FOR LACK OF GOP REQUEST, OR FOR ANY OTHER REASON TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE. ON THE CONTRARY, AS REPORTED MANILA 14377 AND PREVIOUS, USG HELICOPTERS HAVE BEEN AND CONTINUE TO BE EMPLOYED AT FORWARD AREAS AND IN AIRBORNE SEARCH AS HAZARDOUS WEATHER CONDITIONS PERMIT.

3. WHILE GENERAL LOCATION OF BEEPER SIGNAL HAS BEEN FIXED WITHIN FEW MILE RADIUS SINCE TUESDAY, THIS FOCUS IS MADDENINGLY FAR FROM PRECISE FIX REQUIRED WHICH AS YET IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN FROM AIR BECAUSE OF WEATHER AND FROM GROUND BECAUSE OF TERRAIN. THIS REGARD PHILAIR EQUIPMENT FROM SINGAPORE MENTIONED IN AP STORY ALSO HAS NOT RESULTED IN IMPROVED FIX ON MISSING AIRCRAFT BECAUSE OF INABILITY OF ANY AIRCRAFT TO MANEUVER IN IMMEDIATE AREA DUE TO WEATHER. SAME LIMITATION APPLIES TO EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT OF C-130 FROM OKINAWA, WHICH CURRENTLY OPERATING OVER SEARCH AREA. NOTABLY, GOP HELICOPTERS ON OCCASION HAVE PRESSED SEARCH WITH ELAN UNDER WEATHER CONDITIONS BELOW U.S. OPERATING STANDARDS.

4. FROM BEGINNING OF SEARCH EFFORT EMBASSY DEFENSE ATTACHE (AIR FORCE OFFICER COLONEL CARSON) HAS BEEN PHYSICALLY LOCATED WITH THE GOP SEARCH DIRECTORATE AND HAS SERVED AS FORWARD COORDINATOR BETWEEN U.S. AND PHILIPPINE ASSETS.

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5. AS WE AND GOP CONTINUE TO PRESS SEARCH, WE WOULD DEPLORE POSSIBILITY, INHERENT IN REFTEL AP STORY, OF UNDERSTANDABLE TENSIONS HERE (INCLUDING APPARENTLY BETWEEN PHILAIR AND GOP AUTHORITIES) ESCALATING INTO NAME-CALLING CONTEST BY IRRESPONSIBLE NEWS REPORTS.
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